

# WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

APRIL 2002



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

## Unemployment rate decline throughout the region

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area declined from 5.8 percent in February to 5.4 percent March. The current unemployment rate remains higher than the 4.3 percent unemployed one year ago but is now below both the state and national unemployment rates and is lower than the 5.8 percent rate in March 1993, two years after the end of the last recession.

The Wisconsin unemployment rate also declined in March to 5.7 percent from 5.8 percent in February while the national rate increased to 5.7 percent from 5.5 percent.

Of the eleven metropolitan areas in the state six reported a reduction in unemployment rate in March, including Eau Claire which reported the largest reduction of four-tenths a percentage point. Even with the reduction the current rate is much higher than twelve months ago when 4.0 percent of the labor force was unemployed.

The number of residents without a job declined from 4,990 in February to 4,620 in March. Along with the reduction in unemployed there was a drop in the number of workers in the metro area. One can only speculate that the reason for reductions in both the number of employed and unemployed this month is to balance what occurred last month when both estimates were much higher than expected.

Even though the estimate of total unemployed residents declined from February the number of Eau Claire-Chippewa residents receiving unemployment compensation increased. During mid-February there were 3,642 residents who filed a claim for benefits and that rose to 3,919 by mid-March. The mid-April report shows a decline in claims to 3,870, indicating that the unemployment rate should drop again next month.

A similar scenario plays out with the increase in the number of area jobs from 75,500 in February to 75,800 in March. Most of the additional jobs were in retail trade as local merchants geared up for warmer temperatures.

Services industry employers also added jobs as did some nondurable goods manufacturers. Plastics producers, however, lost jobs as did state and local government units. The net result was an increase of 300 jobs in the metro area.

Unemployment rates also declined in six of the seven rural counties of the West Central region. The one county with an increase in rate, Clark, had the fifth highest rate in the state in March with 11.4 percent unemployed. Last month Clark County was among only five counties statewide where the unemployment rate was lower than the previous year.

Half the 72 counties in the state had an unemployment rate at or above 7.8 percent. Included among those counties were Polk with a 9.6 percent unemployment rate, Pepin with 9.5 percent unemployed, St. Croix with 8.9 percent unemployed and Barron with 8.0 percent unemployed.

Dunn County with a 6.5 percent unemployment rate was ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> highest in the state and Pierce, with 6.2 percent unemployed, ranked 58<sup>th</sup>.

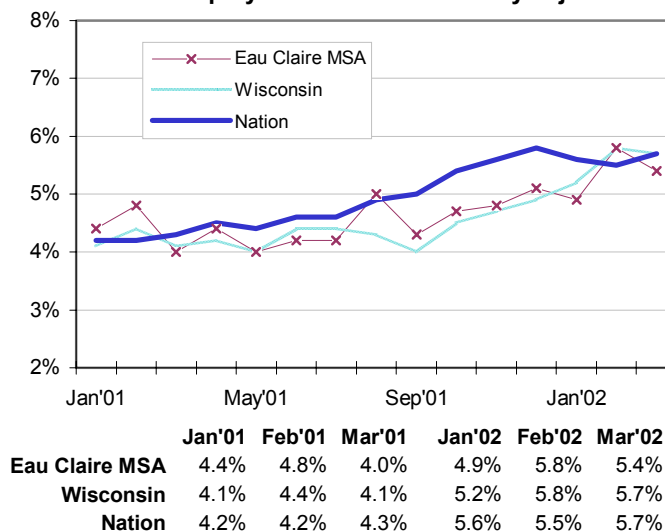
An unadjusted unemployment rate in Eau Claire County of 5.6 percent ranked it 66<sup>th</sup> in the state although the Chippewa County unadjusted rate of 9.4 percent ranked it 18<sup>th</sup> highest.

Manufacturing employment in most counties remains lower than one year ago but in general, manufacturers have curtailed the number of layoffs. Production jobs in the West Central region totaled 36,170 in March, including 11,500 in the Eau Claire metro area. The March estimate is 90 higher than in February but remains 750 lower than one year ago. Manufacturing is

the only major industry group showing fewer jobs in March 2002 than in 2001.

All industries reported more jobs in March than in February but the largest increase was in government and occurred in Dunn County. The increase of 1,000 jobs is associated with delayed reporting from the university and occurred many weeks ago. It accounted for nearly half the 2,300 additional jobs in March throughout the

Unemployment Rates-Seasonally adjusted



West Central region.

The additional jobs in the region added to the total number of employed in the nine-county area. Out of a total labor force of 235,800 in March, 217,200 were employed and 18,600 were unemployed. The total number of employed in the region increased 1,500 from February and is over 4,000 higher than one year ago.

The number of unemployed in the region declined by 600 in March from 19,270 in February but is over 3,000 higher than one year ago. The drop in the number of un-

employed in the area is counter to the increase in the number of residents filing claims for unemployment compensation benefits.

The number of claims from residents in the non-metro counties in the region increased from 5,387 in mid-February to 5,534 in mid-March (as mentioned earlier claims also increased in the metro area). By mid-April the number of claims rose to 5,770. This does include residents filing for the state extension on benefits.

<b>March 2002 Estimate:</b>	Wisconsin	EC MSA	Barron	Clark	Dunn	Pepin	Pierce	Polk	St.Croix
<b>Civilian Labor Force*</b>	3,049,800	85,900	24,500	16,600	23,000	3,200	21,700	24,500	36,400
Employed	2,851,100	79,900	22,600	14,700	21,500	2,900	20,400	22,200	33,200
Unemployed	198,700	6,000	2,000	1,900	1,500	300	1,300	2,400	3,200
Unemployment rate(%)	6.5%	7.0%	8.0%	11.4%	6.5%	9.5%	6.2%	9.6%	8.9%
<b>Total jobs, all industries**</b>	2,774,400	75,800	21,200	9,800	15,700	2,100	10,300	15,100	26,600
Construction & Mining	108,890	2,830	620	430	500	150	370	620	1,330
Manufacturing	563,210	11,510	6,500	3,090	2,260	160	1,370	4,670	6,610
Transportation & Public Util.	130,050	3,240	680	400	520	90	470	460	1,040
Wholesale Trade	135,680	3,220	570	520	600	240	180	370	650
Retail Trade	490,120	17,340	4,180	1,230	4,020	430	2,360	2,630	6,100
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	151,300	2,850	400	220	440	70	320	470	970
Services	770,340	22,210	3,700	1,720	2,700	390	2,060	3,220	6,170
Government	424,810	12,630	4,610	2,190	4,620	530	3,140	2,650	3,770
<b>Change from previous month</b>									
<b>Civilian Labor Force*</b>	-1,700	-400	0	300	1,100	0	-100	0	-100
Employed	4,300	-100	100	200	1,200	0	0	100	-100
Unemployed	-5,900	-300	-100	100	-100	-100	-100	-100	0
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.4%	0.2%	-0.7%	-1.7%	-0.2%	-0.3%	0.0%
<b>Total jobs, all industries**</b>	14,600	300	200	200	1,000	0	100	100	400
Construction & Mining	4,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Manufacturing	-1,470	30	30	40	-30	0	20	10	-10
Transportation & Public Util.	670	0	0	10	0	0	10	0	10
Wholesale Trade	350	30	10	0	10	10	0	0	0
Retail Trade	4,080	240	60	20	-50	50	30	100	80
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	500	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Services	3,520	130	0	30	20	-10	40	-50	110
Government	2,710	-150	30	20	1,000	-10	0	40	70
<b>Change from one year ago</b>									
<b>Civilian Labor Force*</b>	89,000	2,400	800	700	800	100	400	1,200	1,100
Employed	45,900	1,100	900	700	600	100	0	900	100
Unemployed	43,100	1,300	-100	0	300	0	300	300	1,000
Unemployment rate(%)	1.3%	1.4%	-0.6%	-0.5%	1.0%	0.6%	1.4%	0.7%	2.6%
<b>Total jobs, all industries**</b>	-16,500	-400	400	100	100	0	-400	400	900
Construction & Mining	-2,400	300	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Manufacturing	-30,830	-780	20	60	-80	0	80	100	-150
Transportation & Public Util.	-2,490	-20	20	20	10	0	-10	-10	-10
Wholesale Trade	-280	40	10	-10	-10	-10	-10	0	30
Retail Trade	2,740	-580	60	-30	-10	10	80	60	460
Finance,Insurance,Real Estate	2,490	70	-30	-10	30	0	0	20	70
Services	10,440	480	90	10	20	-10	50	60	190
Government	3,850	120	210	50	70	0	-630	110	170

\* Includes participants residing in area. \*\* Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

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